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FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0055  
INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 002589

SIPDIS

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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE. NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/18/2017  
TAGS: [KWBG](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#)  
SUBJECT: GREEK ORTHODOX PATRIARCH SAID TO BE OFFICIALLY  
RECOGNIZED BY GOI

REF: A. AMMAN 02241  
[1](#)B. ATHENS 01021  
[1](#)C. JERUSALEM 225

Classified By: Acting Principal Officer, Thomas M. Duffy, per reasons 1  
.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Greek Orthodox Patriarch Theophilos III received official Israeli recognition on December 16. Theophilos told PolOff December 18 that the Patriarchate will honor previous agreements with the GoI and treat the issue of properties sold to Israelis as a legal matter. He said former Patriarch Ireneos is still in residence under Israeli police protection, but he expects the GoI to facilitate Ireneos's departure shortly. Theophilos welcomed Israeli recognition as helpful to the Greek Orthodox Church and to Israel's Christian communities generally. End summary.

THEOPHILOS RECOGNIZED BY GOI  
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[1](#)2. (C) The Greek Orthodox Patriarch Theophilos III told PolOff December 18 that Israeli Minister Rafi Eitan informed the Patriarchate in Jerusalem December 16 that the Israeli cabinet had recognized him. He said he is still waiting for official GOI documents, but described this as a technicality. Theophilos said the Patriarchate will honor all former agreements with the GoI and treat the issue of Greek Orthodox properties in East Jerusalem sold to the Israelis by former Patriarch Ireneos as a legal matter.

FORMER PATRIARCH STILL IN RESIDENCE,  
DEPARTURE EXPECTED SHORTLY  
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[1](#)3. (C) Theophilos told PolOff that Ireneos is still in his apartment at the Greek Orthodox monastery in Jerusalem's Old City and under Israeli police protection. He said he expects the GoI to facilitate Ireneos's departure from Israel and described the situation at the monastery as sensitive but calm, noting that monastery residents are trying not to antagonize Ireneos.

RECOGNITION OF THEOPHILOS GOOD  
FOR ALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES  
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[1](#)4. (C) Theophilos said his recognition will enable the Greek Orthodox Church to work with the GoI on a range of unspecified issues. He said Christian leaders from other denominations also welcomed Israel's recognition, because the Greek Orthodox Church is often at the forefront of local Christian issues.  
DUFFY